EXHIBIT 54

Case 1:19-cv-01349-FJS-CFH Document 341-57 Filed 06/03/24 Page 2 of 11

Thomas Amell - April 27, 2023

UNITED STATES DISTRICT			
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF N	IEW YORK		
)		
SOUTHWESTERN PAYROLL)		
SERVICES, INC,)		
)		
PLAINTIFF,)	CASE NO:	
)	1:19-CV-1349	(FJS/0
v s)		
)		
PIONEER BANCORP, et al,)		
)		
DEFENDANTS.)		
)		
Remote Videotaped Depos	sition		
of			
THOMAS AMELL			
Albany, New York	(
Thursday, April 27, 2	2023		
Reported by:			
Mary Agnes Drury, RPR, NYACR, Cl	. R		

38 (Pages 146 to 149)

	Page 146		Page 148
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	MR. ALESSI: Object to the form of	2	you say it again, because I want to be
3	the question.	3	Q. I think you told us that you did not
4	THE WITNESS: No. You are twisting	4	care or that the source of the strike that.
5	what I'm saying.	5	I think you told us that it doesn't
6	Due diligence occurred from the time	6	matter where the funds came from over well,
7	the overdraft occurred and continued to	7	strike that. Let's see if I can do better.
8	occur, and you can define due diligence,	8	Do you care where the funds came
9	whatever, investigation, due diligence,	9	from that you implemented the overdraft
10	learning, learning occurred continuously	10	recovery upon?
11	all that period of time.	11	MR. ALESSI: Object to the form of
12	You asked me if I personally looked	12	the question.
13	for the source of the funds. No, I didn't	13	THE WITNESS: I don't know how it's
14	look for the source of the funds, I think	14	relevant. Do I care? No, I don't sure.
15	that would be academic. I don't know.	15	If I had the information that's great, but
16	BY MR. JAYNE:	16	it's not relevant to the decision I need to
17	Q. Did you instruct others to look at	17	make.
18	the source of the funds upon which Pioneer was	18	So the decision I need to make at
19	implementing overdraft recoveries?	19	that point in time is we can't get a hold
20	A. I'm not following you. I'm sorry.	20	of Bank of America, we're short some
21	Why would I care where the money	21	\$15 million. And my decision point after
22	came from?	22	getting all of my information is we need to
23	Q. Sir, this will be easier if you'll	23	act on our overdraft recovery.
24	just listen to my question.	24	So where this money come in from to
25	A. I'm sorry. Go ahead.	25	solve our problem, I'm not sure how it's
	Page 147		D 440
	Tugo 147		Page 149
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	Page 149 THOMAS AMELL
1 2	_	1 2	-
	THOMAS AMELL		THOMAS AMELL
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39 (Pages 150 to 153)

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	Page 150		Page 152
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	still have implemented the overdraft	2	correct and it turns out that the majority of
3	recoveries?	3	the money that was taken or that was recovered
4	MR. ALESSI: Object to the form of	4	as part of the overdraft recovery was payroll
5	the question.	5	tax dollars, does that matter to you?
6	THE WITNESS: It's a hypothetical,	6	MR. ALESSI: Object to the form of
7	because we don't have we don't have	7	the question.
8	those accounts, so there is no possible way	8	THE WITNESS: Does it matter? Look,
9	we would have an account that we would	9	at the end of day somebody is going to
10	classify as a tax account; we just don't do	10	determine who owns these funds. My
11	that business, so	11	position is very clear. It's a general
12	Q. Well, you know as you sit here	12	deposit demand account with money in it.
13	today	13	And I've been doing this for
14	MR. ALESSI: He needs to finish his	14	30 years: When you deposit your money in a
15	answer, please.	15	general deposit demand account, it's the
16	THE WITNESS: Yeah. So you're	16	bank's money.
17	hypothetically asking me if I knew that.	17	So if you put it in some special
18	We don't have that type of account.	18	account, and the payroll industry is a good
19	And in addition to that, look, a	19	example of where you need special, you know
20	part of our due diligence was, you know, is	20	it, right, you own the business, right, so
21	the account restricted in any way, right?	21	I'm hoping all of your accounts are
22	Because there are accounts that can	22	properly established, so that you can
23	restrict the proceeds of money or direct	23	protect your funds.
24	the proceeds or money or there is a	24	BY MR. JAYNE:
25	whole host of things that could happen on	25	Q. Before you implemented overdraft
	Page 151		Page 153
1	Page 151	1	Page 153
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	THOMAS AMELL an account that would provide the bank with	2	THOMAS AMELL recoveries in Michael Mann's accounts on the
2	THOMAS AMELL an account that would provide the bank with direction as to what we can and can't do.	2 3	THOMAS AMELL recoveries in Michael Mann's accounts on the morning of September 4th, 2019, did you suspect
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	(14g05 102 to 100)		
	Page 162		Page 164
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	retain the name escapes me Greisler, Lemery	2	the purpose.
3	Greisler. We attempted to obtain a lawyer that	3	You can answer the question as it
4	we know, because we knew we were going to need	4	was stated. If you need it read back
5	some legal representation, and we reached out	5	please do not answer with regard to any
6	to that firm, but I'm not sure exactly what	6	counsel with respect to any reason why you
7	time I'm not sure exactly when we did that.	7	would have reached out for this Mann matter
8	Q. So is the answer to the question you	8	or any other reason you would have reached
9	don't know?	9	out any other topic.
10	A. Okay. I don't know.	10	THE WITNESS: Understood.
11	Q. I don't want to put words in your	11	BY MR. JAYNE:
12	mouth. Let me see if I can do it this way:	12	Q. Can you answer the question, sir?
13	Is it fair to say you do not know	13	A. Can you ask it again?
14	whether you, Mr. Sarratori, or Mr. Hughes	14	Q. Do you recall whether you,
15	reached out to any outside banking lawyer	15	Mr. Hughes, or Mr. Sarratori reached out to any
16	before implementing the overdraft recoveries in	16	outside banking counsel before you implemented
17	Mann's accounts on September 4th, 2019?	17	the overdraft recoveries in Michael Mann's
18	MR. ALESSI: I'm going to object to	18	accounts on the morning of September 4th, 2019?
19	the form of the question.	19	MR. ALESSI: And I'll object to the
20	THE WITNESS: My recollection is	20	form of that question.
21	that we Pat, Frank as an attorney, and I	21	THE WITNESS: I don't recall.
22	and others made a collective decision to	22	Q. Okay. Let's talk about the meeting
23	act on the overdrafts; and that was not for	23	with Mr. Mann on the afternoon of
24	the purpose of our engaging of outside	24	September 4th, 2019. Okay?
25	counsel.	25	A. 0kay.
			•
	Daga 142		Daga 145
	Page 163		Page 165
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	THOMAS AMELL I believe at that time we were	2	THOMAS AMELL Q. Where did it occur?
2	THOMAS AMELL I believe at that time we were engaging Lemery Greisler to help us with	2	THOMAS AMELL Q. Where did it occur? A. Right here at headquarters.
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	Page 178		Page 180
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	Q. And Joe Fleming was Dave Blessing's	2	he was valuable in the bank.
3	supervisor when the events of August 30th,	3	But it came with the understanding
4	2019, occurred, correct?	4	that I wouldn't move his salary. So he was
5	A. Correct.	5	making significantly more than the position
6	Q. And what did you say his title was?	6	warranted, so I gave him a period of time to
7	A. Joe was the chief credit officer.	7	either accept that or if he wanted to move on,
8	Q. And Joe was demoted at some point	8	he could move on. And we got to the point
9	after August 30, 2019, correct?	9	where I just couldn't afford to pay an
10	A. Well, let me clarify. In title,	10	executive vice president's salary for a special
11	yes, he was demoted. Because in order to sit	11	assets group that was really very, very small.
12	on the executive team, you're an executive vice	12	Q. Where did Joe move to,
13	president if you are a direct report of mine,	13	professionally?
14	so the only way you can be an executive vice	14	A. He stayed in banking; one of the
15	president is a direct report of mine.	15	banks down south, I can't remember exactly.
16	So the position we asked him to take	16	Q. Prior to August 30, 2019, did
17	was a not a direct report of mine, so it comes	17	Pioneer have a policy of not letting payroll
18	with an SVP title. So, technically, yes, he	18	companies have accounts at Pioneer Bank?
19	was demoted, but not in a negative sense.	19	A. I'm sorry, can you repeat that?
20	Q. Do you have any criticisms of Dave	20	Q. Prior to August 30, 2019, was there
21	Blessing or Joe Fleming with respect to how	21	a policy at Pioneer Bank of not letting payroll
22	they handled Michael Mann's accounts at Pioneer	22	companies have accounts?
23	Bank?	23	MR. ALESSI: Object to the form of
24	MR. ALESSI: Object to the form of	24	the question.
25	the question.	25	THE WITNESS: Yeah. And we're back
	Page 179		Page 181
1	THOMAS AMELL	1	THOMAS AMELL
2	THE WITNESS: Yeah, I don't, I	2	to defining a payroll company.
3	really don't.	3	We prohibit in our policy is you
4	Q. What was Joe Fleming's title change	4	can't transact third-party payroll
5	after he was chief credit officer?	5	activities at the bank. But you can be a
6	A. So it's functional. So he went from	6	payroll company; I'll give you that.
7	executive vice president chief credit officer	7	
8	•		l'Il give a perfect example. We
	to senior vice president I'm going to sav		l'll give a perfect example. We talked earlier about GTM Pavroll and Guv
9	to senior vice president I'm going to say special assets: I'm not sure exactly what the	8	talked earlier about GTM Payroll and Guy
9 10	special assets; I'm not sure exactly what the	8 9	talked earlier about GTM Payroll and Guy Maddalone.
10	special assets; I'm not sure exactly what the title is, but it's a senior vice president	8 9 10	talked earlier about GTM Payroll and Guy Maddalone. So GTM Payroll has accounts with
10 11	special assets; I'm not sure exactly what the title is, but it's a senior vice president level, so reports to an executive vice	8 9 10 11	talked earlier about GTM Payroll and Guy Maddalone. So GTM Payroll has accounts with Pioneer Bank right now. And if I could
10 11 12	special assets; I'm not sure exactly what the title is, but it's a senior vice president level, so reports to an executive vice president.	8 9 10 11 12	talked earlier about GTM Payroll and Guy Maddalone. So GTM Payroll has accounts with Pioneer Bank right now. And if I could take on his payroll type business,
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	Page 274			Page 27
THOMAS AMELL	1		CERTIFICATE	
documentation all cleaned up in	that meeting 2			
and, you know, that never came t	to fruition. 3			
Q. Are you aware that T	im Burke went to 4	STATE OF	NEW YORK)	
dinner with David Blessing on Se	_) ss.:	
2019?	6	COUNTY OF	ONONDAGA)	
	picked him up at 7		I, Mary Agnes Drury, a Notar	v Public
the airport and brought him here	·	with	in and for the State of New Yo	•
•	9 m the		by certify:	,
morning.	10		That THOMAS AMELL, the witne	ss whose
Q. Did David Blessing d	iscuss with you		sition is hereinbefore set for	
anything that he and Tim Burke o	discussed over ''		sworn by me and that such dep	,
dinner?	13	•	- · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
A. No. No.			true record of the testimony	given by
MS. NEIDL: Okay. No	further 14		witness.	
questions for the witness.	15		I further certify that I am	
MR. JAYNE: Southwest	ern Payroll 16		ted to any of the parties to t	
reserves any further questi	ons until the		on by blood or marriage; and t	
time of trial.	18		o way interested in the outcom	e of thi
VIDEOGRAPHER: This o	concludes 19			
today's testimony for the r	emote video		IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have h	
deposition of Mr. Thomas Am	21		my hand this 16th day of May,	2023.
The time is 4:25 p.m.	and wa're			
	, and we're 23		MAN	
going off the record.			Timera (
- o0o -	24		Mary Agnes Drury	
	25			
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	1		INDEX	Ü
	2			
(Time Note	ed: 4:25 p.m.) 3	WITNESS/EXAM	IINATIONS	PAGE
	4	THOMAS AMELL		
	5		BY MR. JAYNE	-
	5	EXAMINATION	BY MR. JAYNE BY MS. NEIDI	
THOMAS AME	6	EXAMINATION EXAMINATION	BY MS. NEIDL	
THOMAS AME	6 ELL 7	EXAMINATION EXAMINATION	BY MS. NEIDL - o0o -	
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DEPONENT

THOMAS AMELL

I, Thomas Amell, do hereby certify that I have read or concluded that no changes are necessary to the foregoing pages 1 through 279 herein propounded, except for the corrections, changes in form or substance, if any, noted in the attached Errata Sheet.

THOMAS AMELL

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO BEFORE ME THIS

<u>B</u> DAY OF <u>Sure</u>, 2023.

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES:

NOTARY PUBLIC

STATE
STATE
OF NEW YORK

OF NEW YORK

OUR MOTARY PUBLIC

Qualified in
Albany County

O1LO6404533

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ERRATA SHEET THOMAS AMELL APRIL 27, 2023

PAGE	/	LINE	CORRECTION	REASON FOR CHANGE
10	_ /	19	Change "Sienna" to "Siena"	Correct spelling
11	_ /	16	Change "Sienna" to "Siena"	Correct spelling
12	_ /	3	Change "Sienna" to "Siena"	Correct spelling
13	_ /	21	Change "I have no" to "I have"	Correct statement
19	_ /	4	Insert "it was" before "overdrawn"	Clarify the sentence
51	. /	2-3	Change "CASH T" to "Cachet"	Incorrect words
56	. /	24	Change "under" to "understand"	Incorrect word
63	. /	25	Change "the" to "of"	Incorrect word
68	/	21	Change "come" to "comes"	Incorrect word
88	_ /	6	Change "time" to "times"	Correct tense of word to plural
101	/	4	Insert "formal" between "two forums"	Correct the sentence
101	/	19	Delete "in the form of" and replace with "before the formal staff loan committee and the formal"	Correct the sentence
104	_ /	22	Change "our" to "the"	Incorrect word
104	/	25	Delete the first "his"	Incorrect word
105	_ /	20-21	Insert "have" between "I come" and delete "that" between "find" and "out"	Clarify the sentence
109	. /	11	Insert "been" between "already" and "talking"	Clarify the sentence

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ERRATA SHEET THOMAS AMELL APRIL 27, 2023

PAGE	/	LINE	CORRECTION	REASON FOR CHANGE
124	_ /	6	Change "September 19th" to "September 3	rd" Incorrect date
125	_ /	15	Change "saver" to "savior"	Incorrect word
133	_ /	22	Change "2018" to "2019"	Incorrect year
135	_ /	13	Insert "that" after "receivables"	Clarify the sentence
136	_ /	17	Change "account" to "accounts"	Incorrect word
144	/	17	Change "suspension" to "suspense"	Incorrect word
148	/	24	Change "come" to "came"	Correct tense of word
149	/	22	Change "why" to "where"	Incorrect word
150	/	24	Change first "or" to "of"	Incorrect word
152	/	19	Insert "a" before "special" and insert "account" after "special"	Clarify the sentence
158	/	22	Change "possess" to "process"	Incorrect word
170	/	14	Change "CASH T" to "Cachet"	Incorrect word
179	/	16	Should read: "No"	To clarify that the deponent intended to state no which is in line with his previous answer that Joe Fleming was not demoted "in a negative sense"
187	/	13	Change "he" to "we"	Incorrect word
188	/	17	Change "processing" to "processor"	Incorrect word
190	/	4	Delete "No" and replace with "I am now familiar with the name of Matt Schilling but had heard of him prior to the Mann-related even	

ERRATA SHEET THOMAS AMELL APRIL 27, 2023

PAGE	/	LINE	CORRECTION	REASON FOR CHANGE
192	_ /	16	Insert "is" after "money"	Clarify the sentence
208	_ /	10	Change "CASH e t" to "Cachet"	Incorrect word
214	_ /	3	Change "CASH e t" to "Cachet"	Incorrect word
218	_ /	4	Change "is" to "are"	Correct tense of word to plural
233	_ /	8	Change "we" to "me"	Incorrect word
250	/	11	Change "leftover" to "left those"	Incorrect word
252	/	7	Change "just had" to "have"	Incorrect words
258	/	11	Delete "exactly"	Incorrect, not what deponent stated
264	/	21	Change "mechanic" to "mechanism"	Incorrect word
267	/	8	Change "bun" to "bunch"	Incorrect word
267	/	17	Change "Michal" to "Michael"	Incorrect word
267	/	21	Change "CASH e t" to "Cachet"	Incorrect word
269	/	3	Change "CASH e t" to "Cachet"	Incorrect word
273	/	10	Change "have" to "having"	Incorrect word
	/			
	/			